THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of reply to (a) above.

(c) The Government does not have any information in this regard.

Floating of bonds for unearthing black money

1540. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to issue a fresh series of bonds in order to unearth the black money in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when the proposed bonds are likely to be floated in the market?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of reply to (a) above.

Rationalisation of duty structure on SSIs in Gujarat

1541. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that excise duty linked with Maximum Retail Price has affected the Small Scale Industry in Gujarat adversely and the State has asked for rationalization of rates and duty structure;

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) what steps are being taken to protect the Small Scale Industry of Gujarat which is affected adversely by this duty structure?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Chief Minister of Gujarat made a reference to the Government requesting to consider:—

(i) increase in the level of abatement from retail price from 40% to 50%, for the purpose of levy of excise duty on drugs so as to take care of the small drug manufacturers; and

(ii) reduction of excise duty from 16% to 8%.

(b) The matter was examined and it was decided not to make any change, for the present, in the level of abatement and excise duty rates on drugs. General Small Scale Industries (SSI) exemption is also available for the manufacturers of drugs.

(c) In view of (a) and (b) above, does not arise.

Time limit for setting up of industries in Kutch District

1542. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Government of Gujarat has represented to extend the time limit for setting up new industries in Kutch District till December, 2007;

(b) if so, whether the Government have considered the representation positively; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, whether Government would consider the same positively so as to help the backward, remote, drought prone area of Kutch?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Taking all material facts into consideration, the Central Government have decided not to extend the time limit, for setting of new units for being eligible for excise duty exemption, beyond 31.12.2005.

Bank branches in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh

1543. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of branches set up in rural areas by Nationalised Banks in the country during the last three years particularly in Uttar Pradesh, Nationalised Bank-wise, State-wise ;

(b) whether Government and the Reserve Bank of India have issued instruction and guidelines to Nationalised and non-Nationalised banks to open more branches in rural areas particularly in small villages and towns; and

(c) if so, the outcome thereof and how far rural people have been benefited?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) The details of the number of